

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Abbott House  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005**

**Team Members:** Rita Pettigrew, Chris Sargent, Barb Boltjes, Education Specialists; and Linda Turner, Program Representative

**Dates of On Site Visit:** December 2, 2004

**Date of Report:** December 15, 2004

---

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

---

<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
--

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

**Data sources used:**

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files

- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

### **Meets requirements**

Abbott House is an agency and, therefore, is not required to implement child find activities as a school district would be required to do. A system is in place for assessing all children as they are admitted to the program. Abbott House takes referrals from several sources, including medical personnel, law enforcement, social services, court services, mental health agencies, parents and personnel from other private and public agencies such as BIA and Native American Tribes. After receiving a referral, an informal meeting takes place with the team to see if the child would benefit from the program.

Abbott House is an agency and, therefore, is not required to implement Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (ARSD 24:05:32) requirements of involving children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools. Because Abbott House is private school, it does not place children in other private facilities. However, in collaboration with the local education agency (LEA), Abbott House ensures that special education and related services are administered in accordance with the child's IEP at no cost to parent.

Abbott House sets higher expectations than special education programs requirements and ensures that every child makes progress while attending school. Abbott House staff work with the South Dakota Department of Education to implement all state and district assessments and alternative assessments if needed. Abbott House reviews all state testing and assessments each year. The agency also sets personal goals to achieve for each student in residence. Since Abbott House is only a temporary placement, students do not graduate from the program; however, Abbott House works with LEAs to ensure that all credits accumulated are forwarded to the district upon dismissal.

Abbott House does not suspend or expel students from its program. Abbott House is willing to change any policy, procedure or practice within means of state and federal educational standards or laws if necessary to provide a successful outcome for a student. Abbott House reviews and analyzes discipline on an annual basis.

The agency implements procedures to determine personnel development needs and take appropriate action to meet those identified needs. Staff surveys indicate they receive adequate training, information, and material and personal support.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a

child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

##### **Data sources used:**

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

##### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded children are placed at Abbott House without charge to the parents/guardians. Abbott House does not suspend or expel students from its program.

##### **Validation Results**

##### **Promising practice**

In the event a resident of Abbott House feels they have been mistreated or the rules have been applied unfairly by a staff member, the student will be allowed to raise criticism or complaints without fear of retaliation. Grievance procedures are addressed in the resident's handbook and are to be explained by staff to a resident when a situation occurs. The procedures consist of nine steps, which students are to follow when filing a grievance. An interview with staff indicated this has been a well-received process by the students. Often when steps are taken by a student to write the situation on paper, it is resolved before further steps need to be taken. However, there has been a situation taken to an attorney, which resulted in the agency needing to make adjustments in their program. The grievance process teaches students how to approach a problem in a diplomatic and tactful manner, which helps insure a fair outcome.

##### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

##### **Data sources used:**

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records

- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

### **Meets requirements**

File reviews indicate Abbott House provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a student as part of an evaluation or reevaluation. Abbott House ensures that comprehensive evaluations are conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff and includes input from parents/guardians/surrogates. Functional assessments are completed and summarized in a written report. Data reviewed by Abbott House concluded the evaluation or reevaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements.

The IEP team considers evaluation findings when determining whether the student meets the criteria for a particular disability category. Reevaluation and continuing eligibility standards at Abbott House meet state requirements

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for evaluation procedures as concluded by the steering committee, with the exception of issues noted below under, “out of compliance”.

#### **Needs improvement**

Through file reviews and interviews with staff, the review team concluded functional assessments are completed, but not adequately reported in the present levels of performance pages of the IEP. The agency presented a variety of data that would be appropriate to analyze and include as functional assessment information during the evaluation process. This includes data from the Star reading/math program and behavior observations. A recommendation was given to also use student behavior logs for functional assessment. Overall, the agency needs to improve on analyzing the information to identify the student’s strengths and weaknesses in specific skill areas, which can then be used if appropriate in a student’s present level of performance on the IEP.

#### **Needs improvement**

Through file reviews and interview with staff, the review team concluded transition assessments are completed; however, the agency may be able to improve transition plans for students by selecting from a wider array of assessments, which include an overview of the five transition areas (employment, independent living, community participation, adult services and post secondary). It is recommended the agency make contact with their state regional Transition Liaison to assist them in this area. Additional concerns in this area are addressed under Principles 3 and 5: out of compliance, evaluation timelines and IEP content.

### **Out of compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:25:03. Evaluation timeline**

Evaluation must be completed within 25 school days after receipt by the district of signed parent consent to evaluate unless other timelines are agreed to by the school administration and the parents.

In two of three files reviewed in which students were sixteen years old, the review team found transition assessment was not completed within the 25 school days after the receipt of signed parent consent to evaluate, nor were other timelines agreed to by the agency administration and the parents. An interview supported that the assessments were given at a later date. In one of six files reviewed by the review team, a language evaluation was given prior to obtaining parental consent.

### **Issues requiring immediate attention**

#### **ARSD 24:05:24.01:07 Criteria for emotional disturbance**

A student may be identified as a emotionally disturbed if the following requirements are met: (1) The student demonstrates serious behavior problems over along period of time, generally at least six months, with documentation from the school and one or more other sources of the frequency and severity of the targeted behaviors; (2) The student's performance falls two standard deviations or more below the mean in emotional functions, as measured in school, home, and community on nationally normed technically adequate measures; and (3) An adverse effect on the educational performance is verified through the multidisciplinary evaluation process. A student may not be identified as having an emotional disturbance if common disciplinary problem behaviors, such as truancy, smoking, or breaking school conduct rules, are the sole criteria for determining the existence of an emotional disturbance.

In six files reviewed by the monitoring team, the multidisciplinary report indicated emotional disturbance as the disability. In three of six files, the disabling condition was not substantiated by documentation within the file. The student's evaluation information did not support meeting the criteria for emotional disturbance. Documentation in Abbott House's self assessment indicated 100% of their students have been identified with disabilities over the past three years. Interviews indicated the eligibility criteria for emotional disturbance was not clearly understood by staff as to how the multidisciplinary team tells the differences between a student who has a emotional disturbance and a student who is having conduct problems.

### **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

##### **Data sources used:**

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

##### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded Abbott House ensures parents are informed of their parental rights under IDEA. The agency ensures parents/guardians/surrogates are informed in their native language or another mode of communication (if necessary) of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought.

Abbott House has policies and procedures to appoint and train a surrogate parent for a child with a disability when a parent cannot be located to ensure the rights of a child are protected. Based on the agency's comprehensive plan, parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services are provided with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records

concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education.

Abbott House has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions that ensure compliance, which can be found in their comprehensive plan. In the comprehensive plan, Abbott House has policies and procedures in place for responding to requests for due process that ensure compliance.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirement under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

#### **Data sources used:**

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

#### **Meets requirements**

Base on file reviews completed by staff, the agency ensures written notice is provided for all IEP meetings, and includes all required content. Abbott House has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student.

File reviews indicated to the steering committee that the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities. Based on file reviews, Abbott House ensures the IEP contains all required content. Also based on file reviews, Abbott House ensures transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests, to prepare them for post school activities.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements as concluded by the steering committee, with the exception of issues noted below under, “out of compliance”.

#### **Out of compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:27:01.03(1)(2) Content of individualized education program (IEP)**

Each student’s individualized education program shall include: (1) A statement of the student’s present levels of educational performance, including: (a) how the student’s disability affects the student’s involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

In two of three files reviewed in which students were sixteen years old or older, transition was not addressed in the student's IEP present level of performance. The present levels of performance should be based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

#### **Data sources used:**

- Comprehensive Plan
- Surveys
- Education Files
- State Testing Records
- Employee Files
- Book Keeping Records
- Special Education Law Book

#### **Meets requirements**

All Abbott House students are served in the least restrictive environment with the supports necessary for successful participation.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The monitoring team identified through interviews and observations Abbott House's behavior curriculum (Interaction Motivation Program) as a promising practice. The curriculum outlines a course of study for residents in order to give them the opportunity to learn some of the skills that are necessary for successful family and living. It is the agency's philosophy that improved social and self-help skills increase youth's opportunities to be successful and be accepted by society. The curriculum acts as an assessment tool, identifying the resident's present skill level and defining what skills need to be developed. Thus, the curriculum aids in assessing skill level and in outlining a program, which is responsive to each resident's individual needs. It offers an extensive outline of specific behavioral skills that are considered socially valid. The curriculum is not designed to take away the resident's present behaviors repertoire, but rather to improve or expand the repertoire in order to facilitate appropriate discriminations of how and when to use the variety of skills they possess.

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirement for least restrictive requirements as conclude by the steering committee